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INFO RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHDO/AMEMBASSY DOHA PRIORITY 0028

C O N F I D E N T I A L KHARTOUM 000169

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR AF A A/S CARTER, AF/SPG, AF/C

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/05/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SU](#)

SUBJECT: "DOHA IS A TRAP," WARNS DEFIANT MINNAWI

REF: A. KHARTOUM 168

[1](#)B. KHARTOUM 114

Classified By: CDA Alberto M. Fernandez, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1.(C) Senior Assistant to the President and SLM leader Minni Minnawi told CDA Fernandez on February 6 that he had just been invited by Presidential Advisor Nafie Ali Nafie to attend or send representatives as part of a Government of National Unity delegation to Doha for talks with Darfuri rebels (chiefly expect to be the rival Justice and Equality Movement - JEM). But Minnawi does not intend to participate. He said that SLM's presence would be used to dignify what is a hasty and flawed process pushed by beguiled foreigners eager for an "easy solution" to the complex problem of Darfur. He would only agree to go if there was real progress in implementing the 2006 Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) or the September 2008 accord hammered out between VP Taha and himself and he doesn't expect this to happen.

[1](#)2. (C) "Doha is a trap," a defiant Minni warned. It will strengthen the hand of JEM and of the NCP. According to Minnawi, both have their own reasons to pursue talks in Doha which have nothing to do with actually bringing peace to Darfur. JEM seeks to consolidate the view of some that it is the strongest and most important rebel group while the NCP (despite the cosmetic presence of the SPLM in the delegation) seeks an agreement which will strengthen its own hand and that it can use against a potential ICC arrest warrant of Bashir. "Even if there is an agreement, it will mean nothing and neither will keep it for long," he added.

[1](#)3. (C) Minnawi said that JEM continues its slow withdrawal from Darfur after fleeing Muhajeriya two days ago. He discounted reports of fighting between JEM and either GOS or SLA/Unity in Shangil Tobaya. Minnawi said that JEM found shelter in Eastern Jebel Marra among the only other rebel group friendly to JEM now, a faction of SLM/Abdul Wahid led by Tarada. Minnawi intends to visit Cairo and perhaps Libya in the coming days to talk about developments in Darfur.

[1](#)4. (C) After several heated discussions on the subject with CDA Fernandez, Minnawi reluctantly agreed to meet AU/UN Chief Mediator Djibril Bassole in El Fasher (Minni had refused to do so as recently as February 4). He is summoning advisor Ali Traio to join him for the discussion. Minnawi ruefully noted that whatever words come out of Doha this week, the one fact that is real is that three towns previously held by his forces - Muhajeriya, Gereida, and Labado - are now in GOS hands. "JEM and the NCP are enemies but they seem to be working together to strengthen each other's role. Each one needs the other against someone else, JEM against the other movements and the NCP against the ICC."

[1](#)5. (C) Comment: As several of his South Darfur strongholds fell to JEM (which subsequently abandoned them to the Sudanese Army), an angry Minnawi has lashed out verbally

against all that he sees as having either facilitated or been duped into helping this reversal of fortune. This has included the United States, the SPLM, UN/Au Mediator Bassole and Bashir's NCP. While Minni has been weakened and his diatribe has an element of paranoia and self-pity, he cannot be discounted and his not far off in his shrewd analysis of both JEM and NCP motivation for going to Doha. He is certainly right that signing a framework agreement in Qatar does not necessarily mean peace in Darfur or any real improvement in the situation on the ground. If done badly, it could lead to replacing one agreement with a Zaghawa commander (Minnawi) with a new accord and a different, even more ruthless Zaghawa warlord (JEM's Khalil Ibrahim). End comment.  
FERNANDEZ